

PBS MACNEIL/LEHRER NEWSHOUR
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MACNEIL: The question of how the United States should handle terrorism like this has become part of a public debate between the Pentagon and State departments over the appropriate use of military power. Today in London, Secretary of State Shultz continued his side of the argument. He said an attack of terrorists before they strike would be an act of self-defense worthy of public support. Shultz first raised the theme of pre-emptive self-defense in a speech last Sunday at New York's Yeshiva University. GEORGE SHULTZ (secretary of State): As a nation, we once again face the moral complexity of how we are to defend ourselves and achieve worthy ends in a world where evil finds safe haven and dangers abound. Today's events make this topic especially relevant, but in fact, it is an old issue. The Talmud addresses a fundamental issue that this nation has wrestled with ever since we became a great power with international responsibilities: how to judge when the use of our power is right and when it is wrong. The Talmud upholds the universal law of self-defense, saying, 'If one comes to kill you, make haste and kill him first.'

MACNEIL: For more on the theory behind Mr. Shultz's public statements, we talk with Lawrence Eagleburger, who retired from the number three job at the State Department last year. He's now president of Kissinger Associates, an international consulting firm based here in New York. Mr. Eagleburger, do you think the United States should attempt to retaliate for this hijacking? LAWRENCE EAGLEBURGER (former undersecretary of State): Oh, I think it probably would be a useful thing to do, and I don't mean in Iran. I suspect that our people know fairly well where these hijackers came from. So do (sic) the organization that they are a part of. And I wouldn't be at all upset if we were to try to strike back at that organization. But I think much more important than the question of whether we, we retaliate in this particular case is the general question it raises again of whether it isn't time the United States made a firm decision and announced it publicly that we will retaliate when we are struck.

MACNEIL: Let's take these things one at a time. In the present case, suppose U.S. intelligence does know that the

people who planned this hijacking live and are trained in a particular village in Lebanon, say, behind the Syrian lines, which might be plausible, ah, should the United States attack the way the Israelis do? EAGLEBURGER: Well, you see, it's, it's hard to answer the specific question. I would have to say if it is likely that there were going to be a lot of innocent people killed, because

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I would have to assume it would be an air strike or something of the sort, then I think you've got to make a judgment. And I suspect I would say if, if a lot of innocent people are going to be killed, no, we shouldn't do it.

MACNEIL: That's the judgment the administration presumably has been making. EAGLEBURGER: So far, I would assume. Yeah, well, it, in many cases, although I, I think the question is a close one on occasion. So I think each one has to be judged on its own merits in terms of what we know and where we can hit and how much danger there is of innocent loss of life. But again, I come back to saying I think the, the prejudice that the, the burden of proof ought to be on not, not responding rather than having to go through this agony every time of debating whether we should respond or not.

MACNEIL: If they, ah, well, come back to the question of innocent civilians. Should the United States retaliate against people it believes to be behind acts like this even if it means some civilians in the surrounding area being killed? EAGLEBURGER: If it, you know, again, this is a very tough question to answer. It is, we're in a kind of a war here, I think. If the answer is in the judgment of the people who can look at the terrain, the chances of innocent life being lost are relatively low, then my answer to you would be yes, we should go in. If the chances are very high that a lot of innocent people are going to be killed, then I suppose my answer would have to be no.

MACNEIL: What about if the United, if U.S. intelligence knew that that particular group were planning to hijack another plane or overheard a similar group planning to attack a plane? Should they attack them beforehand, as the secretary seemed to suggest? EAGLEBURGER: Again, I think there is good merit to the argument that if you can act in advance of a terrorist, we ought to do it. Each time, I have to say we have to look at the situation, each specific situation, and make a judgment on whether we can in fact be effective in an attack. But, again, in principle, yes, I think we should.

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MACNEIL: Mr. Kupperman, how do you react to what Mr. Eagleburger's been saying, first of all, on should the United States retaliate in this instance if it knows where these people are or where they were trained? KUPPERMAN: I, I think that I, I would tend not to want to retaliate in this particular instance, when it can be clearly shown

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that U.S. interests are immediately involved, such as an attack against an embassy, and there are gonna be plenty of them. I, look, it's a tool. It's something that we really have to do. I, I, if I object to anything, it is the, the, the constant set of statements that we're gonna attack, we're gonna retaliate each time. We don't have to do it as Israel. We're not a small, beleaguered nation to go tit for tat. On the other hand, I'll be darned if I would wanna see us just rapped in the mouth each time without in any way attempting to protect ourselves.

MACNEIL: So you're not really disagreeing with Mr. Eagleburger on that point. KUPPERMAN: Not in the slightest.

MACNEIL: Yeah. Well, why don't, what, what about your, why don't you believe the United States should retaliate in this instance, if intelligence can pinpoint the people responsible? KUPPERMAN: I think simply because by the time we get done trying to figure out who really did it, the distance in time between the, the, the credible analysis and, of who did it versus our interests as a country and in particular in what hap, in what happened in this particular case may be sufficiently far removed that there would be unnecessary and disproportionately large amounts of criticism for, of abuse.

MACNEIL: Does that make sense to you? EAGLEBURGER: I guess I would say that I suspect we know fairly well where these people came from already, the groups they come from. And if there is an identifiable target from this group, I would say we ought to act against it. But I am, you know, I, I think Mr. Kupperman also has a point. The longer this goes on without any response, the less relevant is, is the response.

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LEHRER: We pick up the debate now, first with James Schlesinger, he was Secretary of Defense and director of the CIA in the Nixon administration, then Secretary of Energy under President Carter. He is now a senior adviser at Georgetown University Center for Strategic and

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International Studies. Mr. Schlesinger, first, you were listening to the discussion we just had on terrorism. What are your thoughts about that and the use of force, first? JAMES SCHLESINGER (former Secretary of Defense): I agree with the point that we should be prepared to retaliate. We do not have to retaliate in each and every circumstance, we should be prepared to retaliate at times and in places of our own choosing. If we fail always to retaliate, we invite attack. The consequence of that is that others believe that they can act against American interests with impunity. We have had a series of attacks on our ambassadors, on our embassies. These are part of American territory overseas and we should not accept these attacks without some response.

LEHRER: What's your feeling on the pre-emptive strike idea? SCHLESINGER: I have some intellectual sympathy with what Secretary Shultz is attempting to achieve. But I do not think that the United States is prepared as yet to continue, over a period of time, to support attacks that pre-empt against unknown targets. There will be too much domestic argument. We are not in the position of the Israelis, for example, and I do not think American public opinion would sustain pre-emption.